

NPL Site Narrative for Kerr-McGee (Kress Creek/W Branch DuPage)

KERR-McGEE (KRESS CREEK/WEST BRANCH OF DUPAGE RIVER) DuPage County, Illinois

Federal Register Notice: [February 11, 1991](#)

Conditions at proposal (October 15, 1984): The Kerr-McGee (Kress Creek/West Branch of DuPage River) Site includes about 1.5 miles of Kress Creek and 0.5 mile of the West Branch of the DuPage River in DuPage County, Illinois. About 20,000 people live within 3 miles of the site.

In 1931, Lindsay Light & Chemical Co. established a mill in West Chicago for the extraction of thorium and nonradioactive elements from monazite and other ores. Later, the site was used for the manufacture of gaslight mantles (which contain thorium), mesothorium, and, during World War II, hydrofluoric acid. Ownership of the facility changed from Lindsay to American Potash & Chemical in 1958 and to Kerr-McGee Chemical Corp. in 1967. Operations at the site continued until 1973, when Kerr-McGee, the current owner, closed the plant.

Over the years, a portion of the wastes from the plant was discharged into Kress Creek, a tributary of the DuPage River, either via a storm sewer or drainage ditch. Radiation contamination, which is found to a depth of several feet along

the stream, decreases with distance from the creek. Many of the highest levels are found near the storm sewer outfall. An estimated 20,000 people obtain drinking water from municipal and private wells within 3 miles of the site.

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) issued an Order to Show Cause, dated March 21, 1984, requiring Kerr-McGee Chemical Corp. to either prepare and implement a cleanup plan, or show it should not be required to do so.

Status (January 1986): Because of an administrative error during the public comment period, EPA is extending the comment period on this site for an additional 60 days.

Status (February 11, 1991): In September 1988, Kerr-McGee won a court hearing against NRC, allowing Kerr-McGee to disregard NRC's order to clean up the creek. In October 1990, NRC ceded its regulatory authority over the site to the Illinois Department of Nuclear Safety.

[The description of the site (release) is based on information available at the time the site was evaluated with the HRS. The description may change as additional information is gathered on the sources and extent of contamination. See [56 FR 5600](#), February 11, 1991, or subsequent FR notices.]